



**CITY OF MILWAUKEE**

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# **MUNICIPAL COURT**

## **Strategic Technology Plan**

**2014 – 2018**

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Milwaukee, WI 53233

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## OVERVIEW

The Milwaukee Municipal Court (“the Court”) is keenly aware of the close relationship between its mission and information technology. The Court is an information-intensive agency – the accomplishment of almost every strategic objective is dependent to some extent on its computer, voice and other information systems.

Over the years, the Court has quite acutely felt the pressures of the increased demands being placed on all public institutions for more responsiveness, effectiveness and accountability. These demands -- from the public, other City departments and law enforcement agencies -- take many forms, ranging from requests for more direct access to court information, the ability to send or receive data in electronic form or the public’s desire to conduct business with the Court via the internet. In all cases, the technological capabilities of the Court must continually be enhanced in order to meet these legitimate needs.

While it is evident that the Court’s caseload directly affects the level of demand for services and resources, it may not be as evident that various court initiatives designed to more effectively adjudicate cases also affects this demand. For instance, the Court has continued its court outreach sessions for juveniles and indigent defendants and its agreements with various community agencies for out-of-court assistance to defendants in fulfilling their obligations to the court. As can be expected, these innovations require changes in technological resources and support.

The Court continues to make significant achievements towards its strategic objectives. At the same time, the Court often achieves these goals with an operating budget that decreases each year. This has been accomplished through strategic investment in technology, innovations in policies and procedures and continual planning for future enhancements that serve to streamline the way the Court conducts business.

In the last five years, the Court has accomplished several major technology initiatives, including:

- the establishment of a regularly-scheduled review of the Court’s computer hardware and software to anticipate the need for upgrade / replacement in advance of the Court’s technological needs and manufacturer end-of-support and end-of-life deadlines (2009)
- the installation and configuration of a disaster recovery environment that provides nearly real-time backup to an offsite location of the Court’s servers, application and databases (2009)
- the use of electronic file transfers to submit vehicle registration denials to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (2010)
- the implementation of a document imaging system to replace the use of paper case jackets (2010)
- the addition of workflow processes within the court’s case management information system to allow judges, staff and other users to view documents electronically and incorporate them into case processing without the need to handle physical papers or files (2010)

- the transition from outsourced programming services to the use of City staff to provide daily, ongoing support of the system and IT project initiatives (2010)
- the update of the Court's website with a new look and feel, enhanced search capabilities with real-time results and full integration of online payment capabilities while optimizing it for access from mobile devices (2011)
- the upgrade of the Court's office application productivity suite (2011)
- the introduction of the first of several website improvements which allows defendants or their attorneys to file an online Not Guilty Plea (2011)
- the introduction of online request to reschedule a court date website feature allows defendants to make a first-time request to change an existing court date online (2012)
- the automated call distribution monitoring system for viewing telephone system information to analyze number of staff available for current incoming call volumes (2013)

This document defines the Court's four-year strategic technology plan for 2014 – 2018 and is intended to leverage the use of technology in order to support the Court's strategic objectives even more efficiently and effectively. While large projects have great impact on improved operations, the cumulative impact of several small projects can also be significant. As a result, the plan includes initiatives which involve both major projects that require capital budget improvements as well as enhancements to be achieved using the Court's annual operating budget funds earmarked for information technology support.

## TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVES

### *Mission Statement*

*The mission of the municipal court is to impartially adjudicate ordinance violation cases such that legal rights of individuals are safeguarded and public interest is protected.*

The Milwaukee Municipal Court's mission represents several key strategic objectives.

### *Key Strategic Objectives*

*Fair and reliable adjudication of cases  
Court accessibility to the public  
Effective enforcement of court judgments  
Accountability for public resources  
Enhance public safety*

Each of the major technology initiatives of the Court is intended to help achieve multiple strategic objectives; therefore, each technology initiative included in this plan will designate which specific strategic objective it is meant to address.

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| Initiative 1  |
| Continued Case Management Information System Enhancements   |
| Year(s)   |
| 2014 - 2015   |
| Funding Source  |
| Operating   |
| Objectives  |
| Fair and reliable adjudication of cases<br>Effective enforcement of court judgments<br>Accountability for public resources  |
| Details   |
| <p>As with any organization or industry, the Court's business and technology needs to continue to evolve based on internal and external changes that affect policies and procedures as well as ongoing developments with systems and software.</p> <p>In order to stay abreast of these changes, the Court plans to revise several modules within its case management information system – known as the Court Automated Tracking System or CATS – including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bankruptcy processing program update</li> </ul> <p>The Court's bankruptcy processing module has not undergone significant revision since originally developed in 2001. Over the years, changes in bankruptcy law and the way creditors need to track, process and respond to notices of bankruptcy filings have been dramatic. In order to streamline the now cumbersome process and provide the ability to record more information about bankruptcy cases, the Court will assemble a focus group to define the necessary changes and then redesign and redevelop the module around those needs.</p> <p>In addition to these CATS-related changes, the Court also plans to undertake the following system-related projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CATS documentation update</li> </ul> <p>Following the intensive tri-phased project to migrate to and then further enhance CATS, the Court must turn to revising the associated application documentation. While some projects may be designed to incorporate these tasks into the development process, the volume of the changes and speed of implementation were not conducive to maintaining the documentation simultaneously with the development. With the project on the verge of completion (Initiative 2 defines the final piece of work to be done) and following the implementation of changes to bankruptcy processing and database maintenance, CATS will have reached a point where it is logical – and critical – to ensure that documentation is current and complete.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oracle database software version upgrade</li> </ul> <p>To keep the application environment current, the Court must plan for the upgrade from Oracle Database 10g to 11g. This upgrade will ensure that CATS uses the</p> |

most recent, fully supported version of Oracle database that takes advantage of new and improved features of the software.

- uniPaaS application development software version upgrade

As with Oracle, the Court must also plan for the upgrade to the current version of uniPaaS, the rapid application development software package used to design and program the CATS application. Again, as with Oracle, this will allow the Court to take advantage of new and improved features of the software as well as ensuring ongoing support from the software manufacturer/developer.

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| Initiative 2  |
| Upgrade CATS  |
| Year(s)   |
| 2015 - 2016   |
| Funding Source  |
| Capital   |
| Objectives  |
| Court accessibility to the public<br>Accountability for public resources  |
| Details   |
| <p>In 2014, the Court will begin a comprehensive review and analysis of the CATS application to identify its upgrade needs. At that time, the current application will be approximately 8 years old and this will be the optimal time to begin the upgrade process before its 10-year useful lifespan is reached in 2016.</p> <p>Since its inception, the Court's case management information system has existed as a client-based application, running on workstations belonging to its network with the appropriate client software installed. With the common use of web browsers, an increasing number of proprietary systems are migrating to web-based functionality – in essence, freeing the application from the confines of its own network and the need for specific software installation.</p> <p>As part of a major upgrade, the migration of CATS to a browser-based application would provide multiple benefits. First, as indicated, workstations with current access to CATS would no longer require the installation of the software that is required to run the application, reducing the costs associated with purchasing, maintaining and supporting such software. Second, web-based functionality would expand accessibility to CATS to other City departments and vendors who can not currently meet the system or network requirements of accessing CATS in its current client-based form. In addition to this, a web-based version of CATS could expand its accessibility outside of the City's network and allow its use – with the appropriate security credentials – via the internet, thereby allowing the Court to conduct more effective community court sessions.</p> <p>Along with this functionality, the Court will consider migration to other database and application development platforms in order to stay current with the latest technologies and tools.</p> |

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| Initiative 3   |
| Upgrade Court Query Website  |
| Year(s)  |
| 2016   |
| Funding Source   |
| Capital  |
| Objectives   |
| Court accessibility to the public<br>Accountability for public resources   |
| Details  |
| <p>By 2016, the Court's query website will require a comprehensive review and update to employ the latest technology and platforms. At that time, the Court will assess the types of devices being used to access the internet and explore additional enhancements that can be made in light of both the technologies that have become available and also what the public has come to expect in terms of online court services.</p> <p>As in the case of the 2011 query website upgrade, the Court will take style and format cues from the City's main website to maintain a consistent look and feel between those pages and the case information query system. While database-related programming will take place as an ongoing system maintenance project, the Court will contract with a vendor to develop the necessary graphics and other visual elements in order to provide the most seamless integration possible with the City's main website. As part of this process, the Court may need to invest in additional software programs that will facilitate that development.</p> |

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| Initiative 4   |
| Increased System Interconnectivity with other City Departments   |
| Year(s)  |
| 2016   |
| Funding Source   |
| Operating  |
| Objectives   |
| Accountability for public resources  |
| Details  |
| <p>The Court aims to establish further interconnectivity between its case management information system – CATS – and the systems of other City departments in order to make various administrative processes more efficient and reliable.</p> <p>The first focus will be integrating CATS and the Milwaukee Police Department's installation of the State's Traffic and Criminal Software (TraCS) system so that officers can select an available arraignment date directly from the Court's calendar database. Currently, arraignment dates are published on printed slips and distributed to officers on a monthly basis for their reference when issuing citations; however, these schedules will not reflect any changes made after they are printed nor can they indicate whether a particular hearing date / time has reached its scheduling limit given the number of citations issued across all districts. When changes occur or specific hearing slots become overbooked, cases must often be reassigned to different court dates in a process that requires significant staff time, results in additional mailing costs for the reschedule notices and sometimes frustrates defendants who may need to rearrange their own schedules to accommodate the new court date. By establishing an interface, the TraCS software could be designed to consult the current schedule – including the up-to-the-minute caseload – and provide officers with a list of arraignment dates that are still available for scheduling. The design of such an interface will require planning and design in tandem with the Milwaukee Police Department.</p> <p>The second focus will be integrating CATS with the Treasurer's Office iNovah system to record payment transactions simultaneously in both systems, thereby eliminating the need to enter the information for the Treasurer's Office manually at the end of each business day. Automation of these end-of-day processes will free up staff time that can then be dedicated to other tasks.</p> |



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| Initiative 5  |
| Remote Court Operations   |
| Year(s)   |
| 2017  |
| Funding Source  |
| Operating   |
| Objectives  |
| Fair and reliable adjudication of cases<br>Court accessibility to the public<br>Accountability for public resources   |
| Details   |
| <p>As an offshoot of the disaster recovery planning, the Court is focusing on establishing the necessary policies and procedures to conduct Court from remote locations. The ability to set up a remote court facility would have obvious benefit in the event of a disaster or other situation during which the Court's main facility was unavailable; however, remote court operations would also provide the opportunity to conduct court sessions from a variety of locations and / or during non-business hours.</p> <p>In order to conduct remote court operations, the Court will work with the Department of Public Works to set up the necessary access to the City's network and test the connectivity from several locations throughout the City, including a predetermined disaster recovery site. In addition, the Court will test and practice its procedures for transitioning from its primary datacenter to the backup environment established by the disaster recovery project in the context of relocation to a remote court facility. Once this has been done, the Court will develop the necessary policies and procedures for conducting remote court sessions and train its staff on their application and use.</p> <p>To complete the project, the Court will schedule a practical test by relocating court operations to a remote facility for a day to confirm that procedures are well-documented and easy to follow and that most – if not all – Court operations can be maintained throughout the event.</p> |

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| Initiative 6  |
| Video Appearance Feasibility Study  |
| Year(s)   |
| 2017  |
| Funding Source  |
| Capital   |
| Objectives  |
| Court accessibility to the public   |
| Details   |
| <p>As an extension of establishing the ability to conduct remote court operations, the Court will also explore providing defendants and attorneys with the ability to make a court appearance using video conferencing technology.</p> <p>As a first step, the Court will delve into both the policy and logistical issues that would need to be addressed in order to permit the use of video conferencing, including the steps necessary to verify the identity of the person making the appearance. In researching these issues, the Court would plan to work closely with other courts which have already or are working toward integrating this technology into their own courtrooms.</p> <p>As with the enhanced website features, the introduction of video conference appearances would significantly reduce the number of people who are required to travel to the Court's main facility in order to be seen in person for case-related matters.</p> |

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| Initiative 7  |
| Enhanced Web Services   |
| Year(s)   |
| 2018  |
| Funding Source  |
| Capital   |
| Objectives  |
| Fair and reliable adjudication of cases<br>Court accessibility to the public<br>Accountability for public resources   |
| Details   |
| <p>With the internet being one of the most simple and direct ways of conducting business – we will continue to make the Court’s website more interactive with convenient services to allow defendants better access to information and online resources.</p> <p>In 2011, the Court introduced the first “interactive” feature on its website: the ability to file an online Not Guilty Plea. In 2012, an additional enhancement to the Court’s website was done to include online Request to Reschedule which allows defendants to make a first-time request to change an existing court date online and indicate a date / time preference for the new court date from the available hearing slots available the same branch.</p> <p>To accomplish this, the Court plans to offer additional services on its website such as the option to Request for Extension. Online requests for a first-time extension would allow defendants to receive an additional 30 or 60 days to pay without the need to come to court. Specific functionality would be built into the website to permit just one online extension and only if it was being made before the judgment due date on the case.</p> |